



# Child Exploitation

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Child pornography and the sexual exploitation of children are tragic, heart-rending crimes that plague law enforcement agencies worldwide. Child pornographers

who assume (incorrectly) the U.S. Mail will provide a safe, reliable, and anonymous vehicle for exchanging such material are aggressively targeted by U.S. Postal Inspectors, regarded internationally as leaders in the fight against child exploitation.

In keeping with this reputation, the Chief Postal Inspector was offered and accepted a seat on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC's) Board of Directors in FY 2002. The Postal Inspection Service has developed strong, cooperative relations with the NCMEC over the years, and it is expected that representation on its board will foster an even more effective partnership through mutual, coordinated efforts to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. NCMEC Cyber Tipline reports are reviewed at Inspection Service National Headquarters and forwarded to field Inspectors who are child exploitation specialists for investigation or referral, as appropriate, and an Inspector is assigned full-time to the NCMEC.

The Postal Inspection Service is an active member of the Attorney General's Federal Agency Task Force on Missing and Exploited Children and participates on the Attorney General's Advisory Committee Working Group on Child Exploitation. A Postal Inspector is assigned full-time to the FBI's Innocent Images Task Force, a national initiative based in Calverton, Maryland, and Inspectors work closely with federally funded Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces strategically located across the country.

The exchange of child pornography by mail is often accompanied by communication over the Internet. Child molesters and pornographers often use the Internet to seek potential victims, communicate with like-minded individuals and locate sources of child pornography. Over the past several years, there has been an increase in unlawful computer transmissions and Internet ads for child pornography, which occur hand-in-hand with the trafficking of child pornography videotapes and computer disks through the mail. In FY 2002, 60 percent of child exploitation cases investigated by Postal Inspectors involved computers, as well as postal violations. Since the passage of the Child Protection Act of 1984, Postal Inspectors have conducted 4,474 such investigations, resulting in the arrests of 3,711 individuals who used the mail in violation of federal child exploitation laws.

In addition to a tie-in with Internet transactions, Postal Inspectors have long seen a correlation between child molesters and those who sell, purchase, and trade child pornography. In 1997, Postal Inspectors first began compiling statistics in these areas:

- Postal Inspectors have stopped 476 child molesters (roughly 36 percent of 1,327 arrests).



**"The U.S. Postal Inspection Service provides an important role in tracking sexual predators, because child pornographers often use the mail to purchase obscene materials off the Internet. In Operation Avalanche, Postal Inspectors created an undercover Web site which they used to bring down what is believed to be the largest commercial child pornography enterprise ever encountered by law enforcement authorities in the United States. They started in Texas; it ended in Texas—because of the hard work of the Postal Inspectors, the good work of prosecutors, and the sentencing of one tough federal judge."**

**—President George W. Bush, from his speech "Remarks by the President on Children's Online Safety"**

- Inspectors rescued 530 child victims from further abuse.

- Approximately 52 percent of all digital evidence examinations performed by forensic specialists from the Inspection Service's Forensic and Technical Services Division involve child exploitation investigations, and that number is expected to increase.

In FY 2002, Postal Inspectors arrested 249 individuals for child sexual exploitation offenses and reported 256 convictions in such cases from this and prior fiscal years. Incident to a search of a suspect's property, Postal Inspectors often find evidence that the target of the investigation is also a child molester. As a result of Inspectors' casework this past fiscal year, 93 child molesters were identified and 96 child victims saved from further abuse. Examples of such cases investigated by Postal Inspectors in FY 2002 follow.

- Postal Inspectors arrested a 35-year-old man, who was an intensive-care nurse at several hospitals in the

Chicago area, after he unlawfully received two videotapes of child pornography by mail. The defendant pled guilty and admitted that, between 1995 and 2000, he sexually assaulted as many as 18 young girls and women under his care. One victim was only nine years old, and other victims were attacked when in comas, unconscious, or so heavily sedated they were unable to defend themselves. The former nurse was sentenced in October 2001 to six years and six months in prison and three years' probation.

- The mayor of Ashland, Kentucky, and a local businessman were indicted in June 2002 as co-conspirators in receiving child pornography by mail and possessing child pornography. Inspectors identified the men during an undercover investigation, resulting in the mayor's resignation from office on May 31, 2002, three days after Inspectors searched his home.

- Postal Inspectors working with local law enforcement officers arrested the head custodian of the Rockwood Elementary School in Oklahoma City on May 20, 2002, after he received child pornography through the mail and attempted to hide it in the school's boiler room. After news of the arrest spread, several female students came forward and reported inappropriate touching by the custodian. Inspectors

served search warrants at the man's home and a private storage facility and seized hundreds of videotapes, student photographs, and swatches of girls' hair stored in labeled envelopes. The investigation expanded considerably after a number of elementary school students were identified on the videotapes. The custodian is being held in federal custody without bond.

- Postal Inspectors identified a man from Whitfield County, Georgia, as part of a child pornography ring known as the "Spanking Club," a loose-knit group of individuals in the United States and Canada who derived sexual pleasure from the severe spankings of children. He was convicted of producing and mailing videotapes depicting the sexual abuse of his own children. Videos trafficked by the club's members depicted extreme child abuse and cruelty. The suspect was sentenced on November 26, 2001, to 10 years in prison.

- Another member of the Spanking Club, from Vanceburg, Kentucky, was sentenced in March 2002 to 20

years in federal prison with no possibility of parole for producing and mailing videotapes depicting the brutal and sadistic sexual abuse of his own children. Postal Inspectors and FBI agents have arrested other members of the group in Alabama, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Wisconsin.

■ Acting on a tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Postal Inspectors and local law enforcement officers arrested an Elizabeth, New Jersey, man in April 2002 for sexually assaulting children, producing child pornography, and distributing child pornography by mail to the Netherlands. Investigators found photographs on his computer depicting child sexual abuse for distribution on the Internet. Four victims ranging from eight to 13 years of age were rescued from further sexual abuse and exploitation.

■ A man in Davenport, Iowa, who regularly babysat neighborhood children, pled guilty in May 2002 to producing child pornography. Postal Inspectors searched his home after receiving a tip that he had received child pornography by mail from foreign sources. Inspectors found videotapes of the man sexually abusing four young boys, one of whom was only six years old.

■ A man in Cheektowaga, New York, was sentenced in July 2002 to 15 years and nine months in federal prison for producing, possessing, and mailing child pornography. An investigation by Postal Inspectors and FBI agents revealed the man had sexually abused his nine-year-old grandson and had been doing so since the boy was three years of age. Further, he videotaped the abuse and mailed the videotapes to others; Inspectors found more than 100,000 child pornography images on his computer. The offender was previously arrested in 1987 on state charges for raping his 16-year-old daughter and sodomizing his 14-year-old son, but was sentenced to only two years of probation for those crimes.

■ A Roman Catholic priest in Baltimore, Maryland, pled guilty on July 16, 2002, to receiving child pornography after his arrest by Postal Inspectors, FBI agents, and Baltimore City detectives. Inspectors joined the investigation at the request of Baltimore police after they learned

the priest was purchasing items of a questionable nature through eBay. They found the priest had spent in excess of \$6,000 on more than 110 items in a two-month period, which he received at the church rectory and his parents' home. The majority of purchases were photographs and videotapes involving young boys.

■ In September 2002, Inspectors arrested an Ecuadorian man who was a regular visitor to the United States and charged him with distributing child pornography by mail. He was indicted later that month on charges of conspiracy to produce and ship child pornography and for possessing child pornography. Inspectors alleged he used a commercial mail receiving agency to sell child pornography, much of which he produced himself in South America and smuggled into the United States.



The U.S. Postal Inspection Service was presented with the National Exploited Children's Award for Operation Avalanche, a two-year investigation that successfully brought down a husband-and-wife team who operated a multimillion-dollar company offering Web sites for child pornography. The principal operator received an unprecedented lifetime sentence in federal prison, and more than 120 others related to the enterprise were arrested across the country. A Postal Inspector from the Tampa Field Office of the Florida Division also received a National Missing Children's Award for her safe recovery of Lindsay Shamrock, a teenaged girl who was lured via the Internet and the U.S. Mail from her home in Mulberry, Florida, to Greece by a German national, who was arrested and charged with child abduction and exploitation of a minor.

Photo by Robert J. Campbell, U.S. Postal Inspection Service